



CERC ASSESSMENT TOOL

CERC Assessment

- Initial assessment of the intensity of a crisis event is vital.
- First, turn to the event assessment checklist on the following page and check the boxes that are applicable to your event.
- Don't spend a lot of time considering whether or not to check a box—this matrix is meant to be a general guide.
- This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers.
- The checklist is meant to take a only few minutes to complete.
- When you are done, turn back to this page, and compare the boxes you checked to those cited in the "Crisis Criteria" column in the table below to determine the level of crisis that you are dealing with and how you may want to respond.
- Reassessment is expected as more information about the event is gathered.

Complete the following worksheets to generate a quick analysis of the nature of the event and its associated CERC needs.

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Event Evaluation Factors			
Crisis Level	Crisis Description	Crisis Criteria	Recommended Outcome*
A	Highly intense in the initial phase. The need to disseminate information rapidly to the public and media is critical. Life and limb will be at risk if the public is not notified about the risk and public health recommendations.	<i>First box must be checked. From among boxes 2, 3, and 4, at least two boxes <u>must</u> be checked.</i>	Operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for media and public response, with an expectation that relief and replacement staff will be needed. Per your plan, form or join a Joint Information Center (JIC).
B	Intense. The need to directly provide public health recommendations to the public and media to save life or limb is not immediate. The public and media, however, believe their health and safety are or could soon be at risk. There is a high and growing demand for more information.	<i>First box <u>not</u> checked, and third and fourth boxes checked.</i>	Operate 20 hours a day, 7 days a week during the initial phase. Set up routine times for media briefings, allow public to e-mail or leave phone messages during nonduty times, and move into maintenance phase when possible. Be prepared to face “initial phase” demands, depending on developments during the maintenance phase (maintenance phases with bumps). May need to form a JIC.
C	Moderately intense. Media frenzy develops. Interest is generated because of the event novelty versus a legitimate and widespread or immediate public health concern. Interest could die suddenly if a “real” crisis occurred.	<i>Third box checked, and boxes 1, 2 and 4 <u>not</u> checked. Three or more of the ++ boxes checked, and one or more of the +++ boxes checked.</i>	Operate 10–12 hours a day, 5–6 days a week and assign a single team member for after-hour purposes during the initial phase. Operate on weekend if event occurs on a weekend; otherwise use on-call staff only on weekends, not during full operation. Attempt to move the media and public to maintenance phases with prescribed times and outlets for updates. No need to form a JIC.
D	Minimally intense. Builds slowly and may continue for weeks, depending on the outcome of further investigation. Requires monitoring and reassessments.	<i>Boxes 1, 2, and 3 not checked. More + or ++ boxes checked than +++ boxes.</i>	Operate normally in the initial phase while preparing to move to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, if needed. Notify relief and replacement staff that they may be called for duty depending on how the event develops. Do not “burn out” staff with long hours before the public and media demand escalates. Practice your crisis communication operations (during normal duty hours) to ensure the system works. Consider operating a JIC if information release is shared.

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Directions: Check all that apply, based on current information.

Criteria Number	Check if applicable	Criteria Intensity (0-8)	Crisis Criteria
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	+++++++	The initial event is clearly recognized as a public health emergency that requires immediate communication with the public to prevent further widespread illness or death.
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	++++	Deaths are expected within a short window of time (catastrophic event). Diagnosis and/or treatment are uncertain.
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	++++	The media and public perceive the event as the "first," "worst," or "biggest," etc.
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	++++	Deaths are expected well above normal levels.
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	+++	The event is occurring in a metropolitan area (with dense media outlets) versus a sparsely populated area (with fewer media outlets).
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	+++	The event is sudden, is national in scope, or has the potential to have a national health impact.
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	+++	The government is perceived as a cause of or responsible for the event.
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	+++	The event predominantly impacts children or previously healthy adults.
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	+++	The event is possibly "man-made" and/or deliberate.
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	+++	Controlling the event may require a suspension of civil rights for a significant portion of the population.
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	+++	Persons involved in the event must take active steps to protect their personal health and safety.
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	+++	Responsibility for mitigating the event falls within the scope of your organization.
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	++	The event has some "exotic" aspect.
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	++	A well-known product, service, or industry is involved.
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	++	Sensitive international trade or political relations are involved.
16	<input type="checkbox"/>	++	A well-known "celebrity" is involved.
17	<input type="checkbox"/>	++	An ongoing criminal investigation is involved.
18	<input type="checkbox"/>	++	The disease or public health issue is not well understood by the general population, or the general population is misinformed about the situation.
19	<input type="checkbox"/>	++	The event is "acute." The event occurred and your organization is faced with explaining the event and the aftermath (e.g., an accident in the laboratory or a chemical release).
20	<input type="checkbox"/>	+	The long-term health effects for humans involved in the event are uncertain.
21	<input type="checkbox"/>	+	The event is evolving. Its progression is uncertain and may become more or less serious (e.g., identification of a novel influenza virus).

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Criteria Number	Check if applicable	Criteria Intensity (0-8)	Crisis Criteria
22	<input type="checkbox"/>	+	The event site does not have a well-equipped and resourced public information response capability.
23	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	The event occurred internationally with little chance of affecting the U.S. population.
24	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	Treatment or control of exposure is generally understood and within the person's control.

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Planning, research, training, and evaluation		
Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does your organization have an emergency response/crisis communication operational plan for public information and media, partner, and stakeholder relations?
Yes	No	If yes, does the plan have the following elements:
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Designated line and staff responsibilities for the public information team
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Information verification and clearance/approval procedures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agreements on information release authorities (who releases what/when/how)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regional and local media contact list (including after-hours news desks)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Procedures to coordinate with the public health organization response teams
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Designated spokespersons for public health issues in an emergency
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Public health organization emergency response team after-hours contact numbers
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact numbers for emergency information partners (e.g., Governor's public affairs officer, local FBI public information special agent in charge, local or regional department of agriculture or veterinarian public information officers, Red Cross and other nongovernment organizations)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agreements/procedures to join the joint information center of the emergency operations center (if activated)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Procedures to secure needed resources (space, equipment, people) to operate the public information operation during a public health emergency 24 hours a day/7 days a week, if needed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identified vehicles of information dissemination during a crisis to public, stakeholders, partners (e.g., e-mail listservs, broadcast fax, door-to-door leaflets, press releases)
Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you coordinated your planning with the community or state emergency operation center?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you coordinated your planning with other response organizations or competitors?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have designated spokespersons received media training and risk communication training?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do they understand emergency crisis/risk communication principles to build trust and credibility?

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Message and audiences

The following are types of incidents (disasters) that could require intense public information and media and partner communication responses:

- Airborne infectious disease outbreak (e.g., pandemic influenza)
- Foodborne infectious disease outbreak (e.g., listeria)
- Waterborne (e.g., Cryptosporidiosis)
- Vectorborne (e.g., West Nile virus)
- Outbreak with potential to spread outside your region or to your region
- Unknown infectious agent
- Chemical or toxic material disaster
- Natural disasters
- Unknown infectious agent (international) with potential to spread to U.S.
- Known infectious agent (international) with potential to spread to U.S.
- Large-scale environmental crises
- Radiological event
- Terrorist event
 - Biological (suspected or declared)
 - Chemical
 - Radiological
 - Mass explosion
- Site-specific emergencies
 - Laboratory incident with laboratory worker
 - Laboratory incident/release of material in community
 - Death of employee/contractor/visitor while on campus
 - Hostage event with/by employee/contractor on campus
 - Bomb threat
 - Explosion/fire—destruction of property
 - Violent death of an employee/contractor or visitor on campus

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Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you identified special populations (e.g., elderly, first language other than English, Tribal communities, border populations)? List any specific sub-populations that need to be targeted with specific messages during a public health emergency related to your organization (e.g., Tribal nations, persons with chronic respiratory illness, unvaccinated seniors)?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you identified your organization’s partners who should receive direct information and updates (not solely through the media) from your organization during a public health emergency?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you identified all stakeholder organizations or populations (groups or organizations that your organization believes have an active interest in monitoring activities—to whom you are most directly accountable, other than official chain of command) who you believe should receive direct communication during a public health-related emergency?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you planned ways to reach people according to their reactions to the incident (fight or flight)? Are messages, messengers, and methods of delivery sensitive to all types of audiences in your area of responsibility?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there mechanisms/resources in place to create messages for the media and public under severe time constraints, including methods to clear these messages within the emergency response operations of your organization (include cross clearance)?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify how you will perform media evaluation, content analysis, and public information call analysis in real time during an emergency to ensure adequate audience feedback.
Have you developed <u>topic-specific precrisis materials</u> for identified public health emergency issues, or identified sources of these materials if needed?		
Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Topic factsheet (e.g., description of the disease, public health threat, treatment, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Q/As
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Partner Q/As
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resource factsheet for media/public/partners to obtain additional information
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Web access and links to information on the topic
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Recommendations for affected populations
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Background beta video (B-roll) for media use on the topic
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	List of subject matter experts outside your organization that would be effective validators to public/media regarding your activities during a public health emergency.

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Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you identified public health spokespersons for media and public appearances during an emergency? Identify persons to act as spokespersons for multiple audiences (e.g., media spokesperson, community meeting speaker, etc.) and formats about public health issues during an emergency and ensure that their communication roles and responsibilities are understood and incorporated into their expected duties during the crisis.
Methods of delivery (information dissemination) and resources		
Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does your organization have go kits for public information officers who may have to abandon their normal place of operation during a public health emergency or join a JIC? If yes, does the kit include:
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A computer(s) capable of linking to the Internet/e-mail
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A CD-ROM or disks containing the elements of the crisis communication plan (including media, public health, and organization contact lists, partner contact lists; information materials, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A cell phone or satellite phone, pager, wireless e-mail, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A funding mechanism (credit card, etc.) that can be used to purchase operational resources as needed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manuals and background information necessary to provide needed information to the public and media
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Care and comfort items for the public information operations staff
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you identified the mechanisms that are or should be in place to ensure multiple channels of communication to multiple audiences during a public health emergency? If yes, do they include:
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Media channels (print, TV, radio, Web)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Web sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Phone banks
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Town hall meetings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Listserv e-mail
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Broadcast fax
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Letters by mail
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Subscription newsletters
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Submissions to partner newsletters
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular or special partner conference calls

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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Door-to-door canvassing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are contracts/agreements in place to post information to broadcast fax or e-mail systems?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have locations for press conferences been designated and resourced?
Have you identified employees, contractors, fellows, interns currently working for you or available to you in an emergency, that have skills in the following areas:		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Public affairs specialist
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Health communication specialist
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Communication officer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Health education specialist
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Training specialist
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Writer/editor
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Technical writer/editor
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Audio/visual specialist
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Internet/Web design specialist
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Others who contribute to public/provider information
Personnel		
Have you identified who will provide the following expertise or execute these activities during a public health emergency (including backup)?		

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Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Command and control:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Directs the work related to the release of information to the media, public, and partners <input type="checkbox"/> Activates the plan, based on careful assessment of the situation and the expected demands for information by media, partners, and the public <input type="checkbox"/> Coordinates with horizontal communication partners, as outlined in the plan, to ensure that messages are consistent and within the scope of the organization's responsibility <input type="checkbox"/> Provides updates to organization's director, EOC command and higher headquarters, as determined in the plan <input type="checkbox"/> Advises the director and chain of command regarding information to be released, based on the organization's role in the response <input type="checkbox"/> Ensures that risk communication principles are employed in all contact with media, public, and partner information release efforts <input type="checkbox"/> Advises incident-specific policy, science, and situation <input type="checkbox"/> Reviews and approves materials for release to media, public, and partners <input type="checkbox"/> Obtains required clearance of materials for release to media on policy or sensitive topic-related information not previously cleared <input type="checkbox"/> Determines the operational hours/days, and reassesses throughout the emergency response <input type="checkbox"/> Ensures resources are available (human, technical, and mechanical supplies)
Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Assesses media needs and organizes mechanisms to fulfill media needs during the crisis (e.g., daily briefings in person, versus a Web site update) <input type="checkbox"/> Triage the response to media requests and inquiries <input type="checkbox"/> Ensures that media inquiries are addressed as appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Supports spokespersons <input type="checkbox"/> Develops and maintains media contact lists and call logs <input type="checkbox"/> Produces and distributes media advisories and press releases <input type="checkbox"/> Produces and distributes materials (e.g., factsheets, B-roll) <input type="checkbox"/> Oversees media monitoring systems and reports (e.g., analyzing environment and trends to determine needed messages, determining what misinformation needs to be corrected, identifying concerns, interests, and needs arising from the crisis and the response) <input type="checkbox"/> Ensures that risk communication principles to build trust and credibility are incorporated into all public messages delivered through the media <input type="checkbox"/> Acts as member of the joint information center of the field site team for media relations <input type="checkbox"/> Serves as liaison from the organization to the JIC and back

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Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Direct public information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Manages the mechanisms to respond to public requests for information directly from the organization by telephone, in writing or by e-mail<input type="checkbox"/> Oversees public information monitoring systems and reports (e.g., analyzing environment and trends to determine needed messages, determining what misinformation needs to be corrected, identifying concerns, interests, and needs arising from the crisis and the response)<input type="checkbox"/> Activates or participates in the telephone information line<input type="checkbox"/> Activates or participates in the public e-mail response system<input type="checkbox"/> Activates or participates in the public correspondence response system<input type="checkbox"/> Organizes and manage emergency response Web sites and Web pages<input type="checkbox"/> Establishes and maintain links to other emergency response Web sites

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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Partner/stakeholder information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Establishes communication protocols based on prearranged agreements with identified partners and stakeholders <input type="checkbox"/> Arranges regular partner briefings and updates <input type="checkbox"/> Solicits feedback and responds to partner information requests and inquiries <input type="checkbox"/> Oversees partner/stakeholder monitoring systems and reports (e.g., analyzing environment and trends to determine needed messages, determining what misinformation needs to be corrected, identifying concerns, interests, and needs arising from the crisis and the response) <input type="checkbox"/> Helps organize and facilitate official meetings to provide information and receive input from partners or stakeholders <input type="checkbox"/> Develops and maintain lists and call logs of legislators and special interest groups <input type="checkbox"/> Responds to legislator/special interest groups requests and inquiries
Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Content and material for public health emergencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develops and establishes mechanisms to rapidly receive information from the EOC regarding the public health emergency <input type="checkbox"/> Translates EOC situation reports and meeting notes into information appropriate for public and partner needs <input type="checkbox"/> Works with subject matter experts to create situation-specific factsheets, Q/As, and updates <input type="checkbox"/> Compiles information on possible public health emergency topics for release when needed <input type="checkbox"/> Tests messages and materials for cultural and language requirements of special populations <input type="checkbox"/> Receives input from other communication team members regarding content and message needs <input type="checkbox"/> Uses analysis from media, public and partner monitoring systems, and reports (e.g., environmental and trend analysis to determine needed messages, what misinformation need to be corrected, identify concerns, interests and needs arising from the crisis and the response) to identify additional content requirements and materials development <input type="checkbox"/> Lists contracts/cooperative agreements/consultants currently available to support emergency public/private information dissemination

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Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Space:
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	You need space to operate your communication teams outside the EOC. You need a place to bring media on site (separate from the EOC).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	You need a quiet space to quickly train spokespersons.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	You need space for team meetings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	You need space for equipment, exclusive for your use. You cannot stand in line for the copier when media deadlines loom.
Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contracts and memoranda of agreement:
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider a contract with a media newswire.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider a contract with a radio newswire.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider a contract for writers or public relations personnel who can augment your staff.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider a contract for administrative support.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider a phone system/contractor to supply a phone menu that directs type of caller and level of information desired: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> General information about the threat <input type="checkbox"/> Tip line, listing particular actions people can take to protect themselves <input type="checkbox"/> Reassurance/counseling <input type="checkbox"/> Referral information for health care/medical facility workers <input type="checkbox"/> Referral information for epidemiologists or others to report cases <input type="checkbox"/> Lab/treatment protocols <input type="checkbox"/> Managers looking for policy statements for employees
Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Equipment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Fax machine (number that's pre-programmed for broadcast fax releases to media and partners) <input type="checkbox"/> Web site capability 24/7. Attempt to have new information posted within 2 hours (some say within 10 minutes). <input type="checkbox"/> Computers (on LAN with e-mail listservs designated for partners and media) <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop computers <input type="checkbox"/> Printers for every computer <input type="checkbox"/> Copier (and backup) <input type="checkbox"/> Tables—lots of tables <input type="checkbox"/> Cell phones/pagers/personal data devices and e-mail readers <input type="checkbox"/> Visible calendars, flow charts, bulletin boards, easels

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		<input type="checkbox"/> Designated personal message board <input type="checkbox"/> Small refrigerator <input type="checkbox"/> Paper <input type="checkbox"/> Color copier <input type="checkbox"/> A/V equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Portable microphones <input type="checkbox"/> Podium <input type="checkbox"/> TVs with cable hookup <input type="checkbox"/> VHS VCR <input type="checkbox"/> CD-ROM <input type="checkbox"/> Paper shredder
Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Supplies <input type="checkbox"/> Copier toner <input type="checkbox"/> Printer ink <input type="checkbox"/> Paper <input type="checkbox"/> Pens <input type="checkbox"/> Markers <input type="checkbox"/> Highlighters <input type="checkbox"/> Erasable markers <input type="checkbox"/> Overnight mail supplies <input type="checkbox"/> Sticky notes <input type="checkbox"/> Tape (be creative) <input type="checkbox"/> Notebooks <input type="checkbox"/> Poster board <input type="checkbox"/> Standard press kit folders <input type="checkbox"/> Organized B-roll in beta format (keep VHS copies around for meetings) <input type="checkbox"/> Formatted computer disks <input type="checkbox"/> Color-coded everything (folders, inks, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Baskets (to contain items you're not ready to throw away) <input type="checkbox"/> Organizers to support your clearance and release system <input type="checkbox"/> Expandable folders (with alphabet or days of the month) <input type="checkbox"/> Staplers (lots of them) <input type="checkbox"/> Paper punch <input type="checkbox"/> Three-ring binders <input type="checkbox"/> Organization's press kit or its logo on a sticker <input type="checkbox"/> Colored copier paper (for door-to-door flyers) <input type="checkbox"/> Paper clips (all sizes)

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